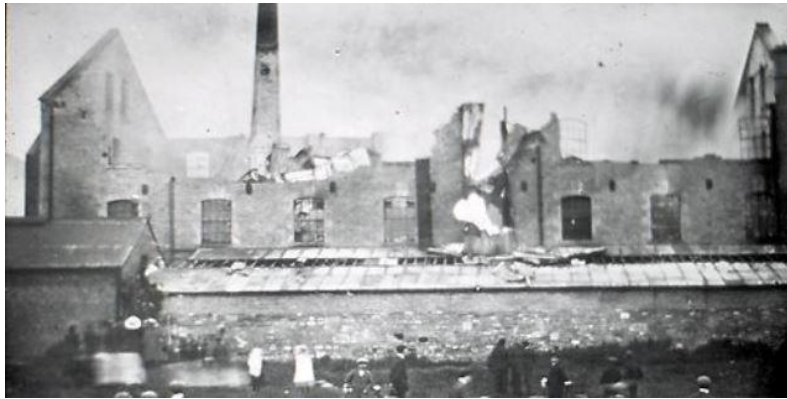


## Disastrous Fire at Melksham

Factory Totally Destroyed

Damage Estimated at £20,000



A disastrous fire occurred at Melksham, on Monday evening, when the feather and flock factory, belonging to Messrs. B. Sawtell & Sons Ltd, was completely gutted, with the damage being estimated at £20,000. This has resulted in some 60 hands being out of employment. The factory, an extensive building, is situated on the Broughton Road. At about quarter past six the first signs appeared that the premises were on fire. Smoke was seen issuing from a rear window; the outbreak was discovered by the foreman, who was just about to leave the premises after his day's work. Fanned by a strong breeze, the fire spread with extraordinary rapidity & for a considerable period a quantity of cottage property in the vicinity of the factory was in danger of becoming ignited. Within the space of twenty minutes the whole factory was a mass of flames, which presented a brilliant scene as tongues of flame leapt high into the air, shedding light for many miles around. The Trowbridge Fire Brigade were summoned and with the assistance of the Melksham Brigade and a host of willing helpers, the flames became subdued. Fortunately a plentiful supply of water was obtainable. By good, persistent work the cottages close to the factory were saved, though at one time they were gravely threatened and the occupants of several deemed it advisable to remove their belongings. Two floors bearing machinery fell in and the crash was tremendous. In endeavouring to avert further disaster, by the explosion of the boiler-room, one man displayed remarkable courage by climbing onto the corrugated iron roof enveloped in a mass of flames. With assistance and the aid of hammers, he succeeded in making a way through the roof, and by releasing the steam from the boiler he avoided an explosion. Gallant, and fortunately successful efforts, were made in the direction of saving the cottage property and the fire was contained to the factory. The main chimney still stands and presents a somewhat unique appearance standing as it does in the centre of the gutted building. The heavy damage, it is understood to be covered by insurance.

**The Bath Chronicle, Thursday, June 2, 1910.**

